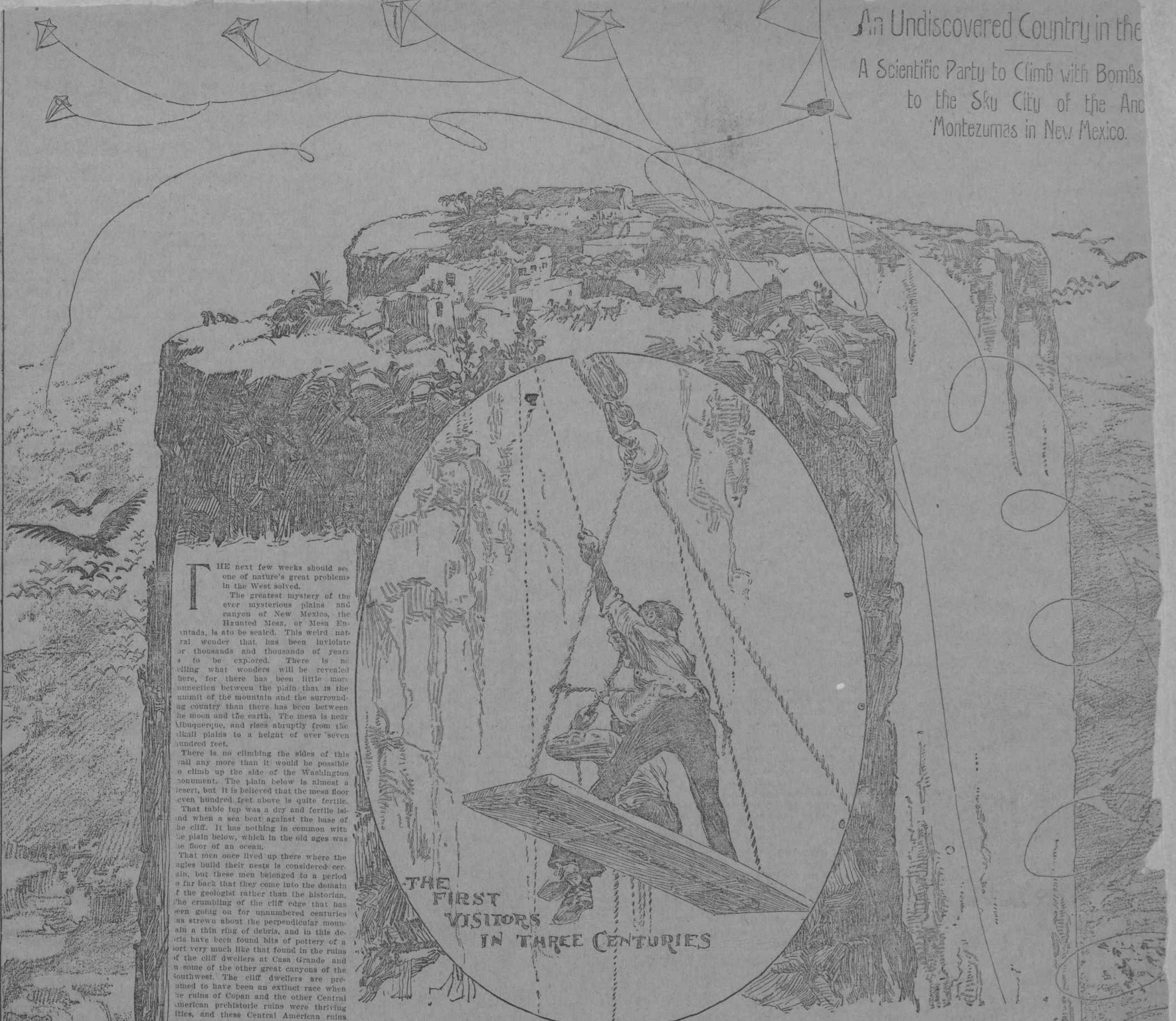


An Undiscovered Country in the A Scientific Party to Climb with Bombs to the Sky City of the Ancients Montezumas in New Mexico.



THE FIRST VISITORS IN THREE CENTURIES

THE next few weeks should see one of nature's great problems in the West solved.

The greatest mystery of the ever mysterious plains and canyon of New Mexico, the Haunted Mesa, or Mesa Enantada, is at to be solved. This weird natural wonder that has been inviolate for thousands and thousands of years is to be explored. There is no telling what wonders will be revealed here, for there has been little communication between the plain and the summit of the mountain and the surrounding country than there has been between the moon and the earth. The mesa is near Albuquerque, and rises abruptly from the alkali plains to a height of over seven hundred feet.

There is no climbing the sides of this wall any more than it would be possible to climb up the side of the Washington monument. The plain below is almost a desert, but it is believed that the mesa floor even hundred feet above is quite fertile. That table top was a dry and fertile land when a sea bent against the base of the cliff. It has nothing in common with the plain below, which in the old ages was the floor of an ocean.

That men once lived up there where the eagles build their nests is considered certain, but these men belonged to a period so far back that they come into the domain of the geologist rather than the historian. The crumbling of the cliff edge that has been going on for unnumbered centuries has strewn about the perpendicular mountain a thin ring of debris, and in this debris have been found bits of pottery of a sort very much like that found in the ruins of the cliff dwellers at Casa Grande and in some of the other great canyons of the Southwest. The cliff dwellers are presumed to have been an extinct race when the ruins of Copan and the other Central American prehistoric ruins were thriving cities, and these Central American ruins are reckoned by archaeologists to antedate all the most ancient of Egyptian antiquities.

The tableland is rather in the form of an enormous irregular figure-eight. Where the two sections join the width of the backbone cannot exceed a few rods, and the scientists who are going to undertake the exploration of this island have some idea of throwing a line over this backbone from a mortar, much as a life line is thrown over a threatened ship from the shore.

The mortar has been purchased, but it is doubtful whether the line 2,500 feet in length can be made to accomplish the task.

The party is to be captained by Professor William Libby, Jr., of Princeton University, and expects to start for Albuquerque during the first week in July.

As a preliminary a consultation has been had with William A. Eddy, the expert kite flyer, relative to the use of the Eddy tailless tandem kites.

Mr. Eddy has sent up cameras on these kites and has taken bird's-eye views of the surrounding country. The tailless kite has a great deal more lift than the ordinary boy's kite, and the party believes it will have no difficulty in sending a series of kites high above the mysterious tableland and obtaining photographs of the mesa from above, which will give them a pretty good idea of the surface before they attempt to explore it.

The party will take with them the material for a dozen of the Eddy kites. Either by the kites or the mortar Professor Libby expects to get a cord over the backbone of the great mesa, and with this he can haul up a larger rope until at last he has a strong cable. On this a boat-swin's chair is to be rigged, and a man can then be hauled to the top.

There is hardly a limit to the wonderful things they may find there. A good many years ago an exploring party dug up near the base of the cliff some peculiar bones. They were about the size of the bones of a small deer, but the skull piece was not that of a deer at all. It could not have been an antelope either, because there was no place for horns. Experts pronounced it more like the miniature skull of a horse than that of any other animal. But some of the leg bones were found that proved that the bones originally belonged to an animal with a cloven hoof.

Now, away back in the eocene period the progenitor of the horse, eolippos, was a three or five toed animal, and the discovery of these bones set the naturalist's heart beating. The bones were not fossilized, which indicated that the animal had only

recently died, and some of the sanguine ones almost dared to hope that on that queer isolated plain there still survived a small horse-like animal that did not have a solid hoof. The fossil chain back from the horse of to-day to the plumed-toed beast of a million years ago is perfect, and should they discover such an animal its value to the evolutionary doctrine could not be greater.

Eolippos, by the way, frequented the shores of the sea, the dead floor of which now surrounds the mountain of sandstone. The scientists hope, for your scientist is a sanguine chap, that as the top of this mountain has not been subjected to the same changes as the country around, its surface may still support some of the life that has died out or been largely modified in other parts of the world.

Of course the Indians have a legend about this grotesque mountain. It is too unique a phenomenon to have escaped even a people so little imaginative as the Moquis and Apaches. It is rather remarkable, by the way, that the legends of these few Indian tribes so widely separated naturally in customs and instincts should be identical on all salient points.

The Indian idea is that the mountain is peopled by a tribe of devils. Any tribe with a habit of sweeping down on the Indians and beating them in war is very likely to be endowed with supernatural qualities by the Indians who suffer. According to the legend, there is somewhere on the summit of that mountain a passage-way that runs down and winds around and around in the bowels of the rock until it finally gives exit somewhere near the bottom. There is a peculiar formation something over a hundred feet above the level of the alkali plain that may have given rise to this notion of subterranean entrance to the cliff top. It may be only a natural fault in the rock, due to the dissolving of some softer strata of stone in the main mass. There is a stain that looks as if it might have been caused by the dripping and draining of water from this formation. The top of this opening, if opening it is, forms a curve strikingly perfect for a natural formation. It would be easy for the Indian imagination to see in it the work of man.

One of the theories that accounts for this fault is that when the water level was up somewhere near this hole the cliff-dwelling people that inhabited all this country had a home in this cycle. Should this happen to be the correct theory, a rich

find awaits the explorers. Certainly never in modern geological times has anything human ever reached this spot. If it was a dwelling back there in that time when the mammoth ranged over Manhattan Island, and the big range that runs from Mexico to Alaska was stocked with the contemporaries of the mastodon, whatever were the household appearances of a cave-dwelling man must still be there.

In other parts of the world fossil ivory has been found on which can still be traced the infantile carvings of a race that lived when that task was new. If people existed in one part of the world at that time, why not in another? The great Southwest is rich in the traces of prehistoric man, and there is nothing impossible in the theory that this hole in the cliff high in the air was once man's home.

A great deal of water falls in this country in the rainy season, yet no cascade brings down from the big surface seven hundred feet above the water that must collect in the depressions. Prospectors have declared that on the almost inaccessible northern side of the huge block of stone they have heard a roaring like a rushing of water, though there is no visible stream of sufficient volume in the vicinity to give the sound; so there may be a spring or even a lake up there, with an outlet that carries it under the arid plain. Should this turn out to be true the rocky wall of the supposed conduit may be pierced and a life-giving stream pour out upon the plain that would soon change it from its desert quality.

That there is some amount of water up there the Indians and other inhabitants of the circumjacent region are positive, be-

cause they have on various occasions found the bones of animals on the plain which could hardly have come there otherwise than by falling from the top of the cliff.

Frequently enormous birds have been seen hovering over this spot of mystery. They are much larger than the large eagles ever seen in that country, and are presumed to be of the condor type. The California condor is the largest flying bird that has ever been taken, and these are said to be more enormous still. The condor is a carrion bird principally, though the sheepshead accedes it of preying on the flocks. No bird of this type has ever been seen on the plain around Albuquerque, though buzzards and vultures are common. Now, the plainmen reason that if these birds confine themselves to this inaccessible summit there must be animals up there on which they live, and what these animals are the natives are just as anxious to find out as the naturalists.

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The mesa is but three miles from Acoma, the pueblo of pueblos, a city without a peer. This city is built upon the summit of a table rock with overhanging crevices still 350 feet above the plain, which is 7.0 feet above the sea. Anciently, according to the traditions of the Queres, it stood upon the crest of the super-Haunted Mesa which is now to be explored, but the only approach to the latter was one day, hundreds of years before the coming of the Spaniards, destroyed by the falling of the cliff, and three unhappy women were chanced to be the only occupants—the remainder of the population being at work in the fields below—died of starvation in view of the homeless hundreds of their people who for many days surrounded the unsalable mesa with upturned, agonized faces. If this be true, the camera will reveal the presence of ruins older than any that have yet been discovered on the western hemisphere.

Now this curiosity has a good chance to be satisfied. We will know more about the surface of the mysterious sandstone table after the plates in the camera attached to the tailless kites are developed, and still more after some daring and ardent scientist has been swung up in the boat-swin's chair.

Kite Scientist Eddy Says It's Practicable.

Editor New York Journal:

Professor William Libby's admirable and perfectly practicable plan to scale Acoma Mesa, or the New Mexican tableland, by means of my tailless kites brings up the question of the best means to sustain a line in mid air and to cause it to recede from the point at which my kites are sent up in such a manner that the line can be dropped over and beyond the precipitous walls which extend upward 700 feet from the dead level of the plain. I have suggested to Professor Libby two methods of carrying a line over the mesa. One way is to attach a pendant weight to a kite line sustained in mid air by a sufficient number of tandem kites, which would lift a line capable of standing 3,000 feet of its own weight and having sufficient strength to withstand the abrasion or retardation while being dragged over the mesa. Such a cord should be able to stand a strain of 200 pounds, otherwise it might give way under the strain of hauling it over somewhat sharp angles of rock. Professor Libby assures me that the red sandstone of the perpendicular walls has been somewhat rounded by the attrition of the elements and that the crevices or seams are horizontal; the first kite line has been dropped over the few acres constituting the surface of the mesa the stronger lines will more readily make their way. It is charging force to sustain it, it recedes instead of rising high into the air. I have frequently lifted my camera above houses, trees and telegraph wires, and on November 7, 1903, my line was from Third street, Bayonne, to a point over Newark Bay, the ground line being 5,500 feet in length and the altitude of the top kite 5,500 feet in perpendicular height above the water. Professor Libby says that the wind lasts for only two hours in the early morning. In that case no pendant weight will be necessary, for with the going down of the wind kites will no longer be sustained and will fall to the plane below, carrying the kite line directly over the mesa. Undoubtedly my mid air camera could be sent up above the mesa and would give definite and near views of the cliff dwellings vaguely seen from below.

In my opinion, Professor Libby will within a few months thoroughly explore the Acoma Mesa by means of the kite and mortar life lines.

WILLIAM A. EDDY.

This is the way the bomb and the kites will be worked in order to unravel the mystery

What the travels or